

## Compressed Gas Cylinder Mishap



### What Happened?

Recently, a compressed gas cylinder, containing Halon 1301, discharged and injured an employee. The discharge was the result of inadvertent activation of the discharge component of the cylinder. The pressure propelled the cylinder striking the employee, causing a broken leg and skin damage. The employee has not returned to work. He will be released by his physician to return to work in late July.

### What Can You Do?

Here are some general reminders about precautions when working around compressed gases that may help prevent mishaps of this nature:

- Compressed gas cylinders must be properly labeled. Empty cylinders should be marked "Empty." Organize the storage area so the cylinders that have been there the longest are used first; put the newest ones in the back.
- The Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) must be readily available for any compressed gases used in your work area. An MSDS should also be available during transport of any cylinder. Read the MSDS carefully for information about handling, storage, and use. It will also tell you what to do in an emergency. Employees may view or print MSDSs via the web at: <http://msdspro.gsfc.nasa.gov/intro.html>.
- Don't try to fix a cylinder leak or malfunctioning valve yourself. If an inert gas cylinder begins to leak, ensure that it is firmly secured and leave the area. **Note: An oxygen deficient atmosphere could occur without proper ventilation.** If a flammable or toxic gas cylinder begins to leak, evacuate the area and call 911 for emergency assistance.

### Storage:

- Store your cylinders carefully in a dry, well-ventilated, unheated area. They should be away from flammable materials, salt, corrosive chemicals and fumes to avoid an explosion.
- All compressed gas cylinders should be secured at least two thirds of the way up the cylinder.
- When in storage all cylinders should have the valve cap securely in place.
- Incompatible materials should be stored separately
  - Flammable and oxidizers are to be separated by at least 20 feet or by a 5 foot high one-half-hour rated fire wall.

### Handling:

- Compressed gas cylinders require careful handling. If mistreated, they can release toxic or flammable gases, burn or explode.
- Handle each cylinder as if each one were "full." Do not drop them.

Remember – "Caution" is the key word when handling, transporting, storing or using compressed gas cylinders.

For general information or information on storage or handling of Compressed Gas Cylinders, call x6-6905 at Greenbelt or x7-2518/x7-2559 at Wallops.

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For additional information, contact Lisa Cutler x6-7409.